

## News

# **Failing to connect: Marketing messages for women fall short : To woo women and their \$6 trillion in buying power, more sophistication needed**

**HILLARY CHURA**

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With \$6 trillion on the table, marketers are waking up to the power of the purse-and the realization they need to connect with American women.

Producers of cars, financial services and traditional package goods are trying new twists on marketing to women, who command 85% of what the Bureau of Economic Analysis values as \$7 trillion in total personal consumption expenditures. They're tapping the expertise of ad agencies with new women-dedicated units, creating new for-women-only products and redesigning existing ones to suit women. They're reshaping ad and promotional approaches to give them more feminine flair.

But like nervous teenage boys at a junior high dance, marketers haven't figured out how to talk to women, who comprise 51% of the U.S. population.

Carrie McCament, senior VP-group account director at Interpublic Group of Cos.' Mullen, Winston-Salem, N.C., and founder of the shop's Frank about Women unit that launched in May, said marketers won't succeed if they "sell" to women, vs. "connect" with them. "This is not new news, but a lot of people are not paying attention to it. Maybe some marketers don't understand women are making or breaking their brand."

Some are making strides. Instead of merely putting men's products into pretty pink boxes, marketers have begun to create products with real points of difference or are adapting existing products to benefit women. In 1996 no products specifically aimed at women were launched, compared with 32 in 2000, 40 in 2001 and 24 so far this year, according to Mintel International Group, a new-product tracking company.

taking aim

Recent female-specific product launches include PepsiCo's Aquafina Essentials, a slightly sweetened, fruit-flavored bottled water spiked with minerals and vitamins; PepsiCo's Quaker Foods & Beverages' Nutrition for Women cereal line, with ingredients such as calcium, soy and folic acid; and Brown Forman Corp.'s Southern Twist, a sweet, fruity derivation of Southern Comfort designed for the female palate. Procter & Gamble Co. is in the process of launching Crest Rejuvenating Effects, a toothpaste line featuring flavoring and packaging to appeal to the softer sex, and shepherded by a trio of marketing managers internally dubbed "Chicks in Charge."

Agencies, too, are responding. Publicis Groupe's Saatchi & Saatchi is setting up a female-focused division. Havas' Arnold Worldwide's women's insight team went operational late last year, while others, like independent DiMassimo Brand Advertising and Bcom3 Group's Leo Burnett USA have had women's units for years.

As boys and girls who grew up in the women's liberation movement hit Madison Avenue, Main Street and Wall Street, corporate America is trying to better connect with the female audience.

In launching the Venus women's razors last year, for example, Gillette Co. researched psychological issues specific to women and came out with an ergonomically designed razor with an oval head and curved handle-which fits more easily in a woman's hand-rather than just a cute Mach 3. And Coca-Cola Co. has explored creating a bottle that doesn't require drinkers to tilt back their heads while drinking-a vulnerable position women tend to dislike. Sherwin-Williams recently designed a Dutch Boy easy-to-use "Twist and Pour" paint can targeted specifically at women.

## **FOLLOW THE MONEY**

Yet some say marketers aren't doing enough to target women. "If 15% of purchases are made by men, why do we spend so much time worrying about them?" asked Mary Lou Quinlan, CEO of Just Ask a Woman.

Indeed, if money talks, marketers should be chatting up women. "Companies that decide to wait ... [to market to women] will be goners," said Marti Barletta, a former Clorox marketing executive and a Chicago agency veteran now writing "Marketing to Women: How to Understand, Reach and Increase Your Share of the Largest Market."

"It's not only the current size of the market but the projected growth of the market. We're talking about exponential growth now with women's earnings ... and [women who make] more and more financial decisions for their households."

Women represent 47% of the nation's workforce-up from 35% in 1967 and 29% in 1950, according to the Census Bureau. They still earn less than men, although the gap generally is narrowing. In 1985, women earned 68% as much as men; now it's 75%, according to global marketing-research consultancy RoperASW and the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

That's one reason why financial services, stereotypically a male-focused industry, has been wising up to women since the 1990s. Nearly every financial campaign now features women or has some female-dedicated executions. MassMutual created a TV spot from Interpublic's Lowe, New York, featuring a frog and a narrative of a girl who wanted to be Joan Jett, but "Got practical. Got a job. Bumped into the glass ceiling. Started her own business. Never kissed a frog. Never had to."

Citigroup went further, launching Women & Co. in 2000 to sell financial services, and its spring campaign via Omnicom Group's Merkley Newman Harty, New York, shows designer jeans and shoes with tags such as "IRA" and "mutual fund," suggesting there are better places to put one's money than one's closet.

Faith Popcorn, trend forecaster and author of several books including "Eveolution: Understanding Women-Eight Essential Truths that Work in Your Business and Your Life," said marketers fail to realize that changes and tweaks that would appeal to women could earn them an exponential boost in profits and sales. They envision that "it would require too much change."

General Motors Corp., however, realizes that small improvements can yield big returns. Miriam Muley, executive director of marketing and sales at the automaker's Center of Expertise on Diversity, said GM "is very aggressively supporting women's marketing," adding "the funding is very much driving incremental sales growth."

Earlier this summer, Ms. Muley's group sent a direct mailer to 1 million women offering them \$100 spa certificates for test-driving a GMC sport utility. The effort, handled by GM's women's agency of record Mullen, Wenham, Mass., is gaining female customers for GMC, Ms. Muley said.

GM has no specific women's unit; it consolidated its women's initiatives with multicultural and youth efforts from the vehicle divisions last year.

Competitor Ford Motor Co., meanwhile, last fall disbanded its women's marketing group, saying the concept of a gender-specific unit was outdated. Chrysler's Women Advisory Committee, which did women's research for the carmaker for more than 20 years, folded about a year ago due to new management's focus on recovering from losses that began at the end of 2000.

'Road Trip'

DaimlerChrysler's Chrysler Group inked a multimillion-dollar, one-year, multimedia deal with Martha Stewart Living Omnimedia in April including sweepstakes, events, radio, TV and online properties, as well as sole auto sponsorship of a special "Road Trip" section in Martha Stewart Living. Chrysler followed the lead of rival Ford, which signed a \$5 million, multimedia deal with Ms. Stewart's media empire in 1998.

Experts say that in order to truly connect with women, marketers must understand the benefits that generally appeal to them. For technology companies to win a woman's loyalty, for example, they should address ease of use and customer service, not just processing power, said Bob Pares, senior VP at Roper ASW. Clothing manufacturers should cut clothes to fit but still flatter an older woman's body, and retailers must work hours that women don't, others said.

Package-goods marketers must also do more than introduce calcium-enriched orange juice to reach women. They have to speak smartly to their biggest target, without what some criticize as unrealistic depictions of orgasmic reactions to shampoo or euphoria over a cup of yogurt.

But it's hard for anyone, male or female, to jump right in with the correct insights. "There are marketers and advertising professionals who ... know so much about marketing and advertising in general, they think they can skip doing the research" about women, Ms. Barletta said. Even companies that concentrate on concepts important to women-like safety-often hit the wrong tone, Ms. Quinlan said. Seeing crash-test dummies undamaged after being slung through a steering wheel as their auto slams into a concrete wall, for example, is less soothing to a mom than Detroit intended.

Still, female-specific marketing does not make sense for every category. Beer is one.

Brewers have done little to cultivate women, largely because men down exponentially more of their products than do women. Even light beer, the largest segment of the market, primarily is consumed by men.

In the beer business, said Randy Stone, CEO of consultant Marketing Management Analytics, marketing to women "ain't ever gonna be the path to glory."

contributing: mercedes cardona, jean halliday, kate macarthur, jack neff and stephanie thompson

Photo Caption: Female intuition: Clockwise from top, left: Mullen's Carrie McCament, Trend-watcher Faith Popcorn, Just ask a Woman's MaryLou Quinlan and General Motors' Miriam Huley. \* Ladies' choice: Aquafina Essentials, Crest Rejuvenating Effects, Southern Comforts' Southern Twist and Quaker's Nutrition for Women oatmeal. \* How-to: Former Clorox exec Marti Barletta, author of 'Marketing to Women' \* All in the mind: In ads for women, marketers address traditional psychological issues around money, independence and home improvement. Print ads for Citibank's Women & Co. division highlight investment plans for women as alternatives to shopping sprees at the mall. Work for MassMutual celebrates women's financial freedom, and Sherwin William's Dutch Boy appeals to women with an ad featuring its 'Twist and Pour' paint can. differently to women than men. Domestically they: Tailor-made: Marketing messages should be tailored than the population of Germany, France and the U.K. combined. Art Caption: Power of the purse: U.S. women have more spending power

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